

Steve Fleischman
November 2013

Background

Conburn, Penuel, & Geil (2012) identified the need to develop new roles and capacities in organizations in order to build capacity for successful partnerships. They state that researchers must learn skills such as:

- the ability to negotiate problems of practice with individuals in local districts
- those related to partnership development and maintenance
- new forms of design, such as techniques that support practitioners' participation in design and facilitation of Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles
- how to translate work

Coburn et al write:

“At present, there are virtually no organized opportunities to learn these skills. Most universities are not set up to train researchers to work with school districts in this way. And, most school districts do not have the resources or infrastructure to support their teachers, principals, and district leaders in learning new roles. To the degree that capacity emerges, it is an unacknowledged by-product of individual grants and projects. Funders may want to build into funding requirements explicit attention to building the capacity of researchers and practitioners to do this boundary-spanning work. They should also consider providing funds specifically for capacity-building activities.”

Our challenge

Education Northwest is a research and evaluation, technical assistance and professional development, and strategic communications organization. How do we mobilize and strengthen the talents, interests, and commitments of our staff to promote effective research-practice partnerships?

Three strategies we use to foster the next generation of applied researchers

1. **Recruit** researchers with the knowledge, skills, aptitude, and commitment to perform new roles.

RECRUITMENT PROFILE	RECRUITMENT SOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion for using evidence to achieve positive outcomes in education and society • Practice- or policy-based experience • Strong interpersonal skills and a desire to apply them in partnership situations • Top notch research skills and/or strong knowledge base in areas relevant to partnership work • Ability to produce and explain research to multiple audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice- or policy-oriented institutes based at universities • Graduate programs focused on research-practice-policy connections • Organizations conducting research-practice partnership work • District or SEA research, evaluation, or data use offices • Applied research organizations and policy organizations • Referrals from professors who focus on applied research

2. **Grow our own** current staff through professional development and teaming.

All of our partnership leaders are responsible for identifying staff strengths as well as needs. To ensure that we protect the time and structures to “grow our own” we also created a position focused on four areas of professional growth:

<p><u>Area 1: Building and Sustaining Research Alliances</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating with alliances • Setting and pursuing goals • Achieving mutualism • Facilitating meetings and events 	<p><u>Area 2: Communicating Research</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing for multiple audiences • Displaying data • Presenting research to multiple audiences
<p><u>Area 3: Providing Technical Assistance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining & identifying data analytic TA • Building capacity • Developing understanding of research 	<p><u>Area 4: Conducting effective teamwork</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting effective team processes • Applying the learning of other teams • Using data to drive activity planning

3. **Promote systemic solutions**, which include:

Develop relationships (formal partnerships, recruitment, and referrals) to create a talent pipeline.

Seek funding to establish professional development opportunities (internship, training, residencies, etc.) to prepare next generation researchers.

Advocate on behalf of the research-practice “movement” by raising its visibility and promoting its value to researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.